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# Articles in Today's Clips

**Monday, June 23, 2008**

(Be sure to maximize your screen to read your clips)

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# **2-year-old's drowning still under investigation**

## **Autopsy report has not yet been released**

By Christy Arboscello • Free Press Staff Writer • June 23, 2008

Autopsy findings for a 2-year-old Detroit boy who was found unconscious in a Clinton Township swimming pool Friday evening have not yet been released because police are still investigating his death, Macomb County Medical Examiner Dr. Daniel Spitz said this morning.

Although police said the boy drowned in an in-ground pool in the backyard of a house at Knollwood Court in the 17 Mile and Garfield area, Spitz did not officially announce a cause of death. In addition to the ongoing investigation, Spitz said he is also awaiting toxicology test results.

According to police, the boy — whom police identified only as Marcellus but were not immediately sure of the spelling — was discovered by his mother's boyfriend. At 6:14 p.m., someone at the residence called 911. Adults then tried transporting him, but were met by EMS personnel as they were leaving the subdivision. He was later pronounced dead at Henry Ford Hospital at 19 Mile and Garfield following attempts to resuscitate him.

Detectives are investigating the drowning, including how he got into the pool and how long he was there before he was found.



## Volunteers search for James Franklin, Alzheimer's patient missing since May

Posted by Sally York | The Flint Journal June 21, 2008 15:13PM

**GRAND BLANC TWP., Michigan** -- A group of about 40 volunteers searched Saturday for a missing elderly man with Alzheimer's disease who walked away from a group home last month.

Starting at 8:30 a.m., the volunteers canvassed the area around Clare Bridge of Grand Blanc, 5130 E. Baldwin Road, where police said James B. Franklin Jr., 75, left on his first night at the specialized care facility in May.

"We have no new information," said Sgt. Marc Ferguson, who facilitated the search. "We're just double-checking our work."

The volunteers were organized by Franklin's son and included a K-9 search and rescue group, and a radio communications group from Kent County, said Ferguson, the only police officer who participated.

The group broke up into five teams and used maps to conduct the search, the officer said.

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Monday, June 23, 2008

# Michigan electricity customers tell state of hardships, losses

**Mark Hornbeck / Detroit News Lansing Bureau**

**LANSING** -- Customers who lost power for six to eight days following a series of severe thunderstorms in early June told a state regulator today that something must be done to prevent lengthy electricity interruptions.

The customers of DTE and Consumers Energy testified before Public Service Commissioner Monica Martinez in Lansing that the power outage was especially tough on isolated senior citizens. The PSC has launched an investigation into utility response in the wake of the storms, which left 720,000 customers without power for varying lengths of time.

"My parents were six days without power. They're 88 years old," said Patricia Barone, speaking for Alice and Jerry Barone of Bloomfield Hills. "They lost \$350 worth of food in the freezer and they couldn't eat. This creates a great deal of suffering for elderly people."

Others said the power loss was a health hazard because they had no water or septic service. One woman said her cattle got loose because power to her electric fence was out.

Many said they called the utilities several times; were put on hold for 90 minutes at a time; were told their power would be restored and it was not; and left messages that were never returned.

Jim Padgett, director of regulatory affairs for DTE, said after the hearing that he wasn't surprised by the testimony.

"The length of restoration time was due to the severity of the storms," Padgett said.

He acknowledged problems with the utility's automated call answering system.

"Our staff is taking a look at it and we'll file a report," he said.

Martinez, who lost electricity at her own home in the Lansing area, said the PSC will review whether the utilities followed the rules in their response to the storms, including adequate maintenance and tree-trimming, response to citizens, pole replacement and other issues.

"If they violated the rules, we can institute penalties," Martinez said.

The PSC will conduct three more hearings, including:

- 1 p.m. Friday at the Commission Chambers, 9th Floor, Grand Rapids City Hall Building, Grand Rapids.

- 10 a.m. June 30 in the auditorium of the Clinton-Macomb Public Library, 40900 Romeo Plank Road, Clinton Township.
- 2 p.m. June 30 in Board of Commissioners' Auditorium, Oakland County Courthouse, 1200 North Telegraph Road, Pontiac.

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# PattyCake PlayHouse opens second child care center

**Posted by Cole Waterman | The Saginaw News June 21, 2008 16:09PM**

After three years of success, the PattyCake PlayHouse Childcare & Preschool Center is expanding its circle.

At 2115 Ring in Saginaw, PattyCake PlayHouse II is what owner Nicole N. Liggins, 30, calls a "satellite center."

Liggins cited the need for a daycare in that neighborhood as part of her motivation to expand. Located in an area known as Sandhill, the neighborhood's median family income topped the county average in the 2000 Census, up \$2,000 from the 1990 Census.

The racially diverse neighborhood saw an increase in population from 1990 to 2000 as well, with 31 people moving into Sandhill. The area has experienced a decrease in crime since the 1990s because of an alert neighborhood watch program.

"We've done so well with our first location, we felt it was time to grow our business," Liggins said. She and sister Yolanda Y. Young, 38, started the PattyCake PlayHouse business in 2005, when they opened at 1310 N. Michigan in Saginaw. "It's a growth opportunity, and it's an opportunity for that specific community."

Liggins has a community development degree and a bachelor's degree in science from Central Michigan University, where she is pursuing her master's degree in early childhood development.

She and Young started the first PattyCake PlayHouse in 2005 after failing to find adequate childcare for their own children. Liggins has one son, 6, and is expecting a daughter in September. Young has three children.

The original Playhouse accepts children from 2.5 weeks to 12 years old, with 75 children currently enrolled. Providing preschool and after school care, Liggins's goal is to make sure children "are safely taken care of and provided with meals while their parents are working."

With help from partner Mark F. Pumford, owner of Kochville Township-based Pumford Construction Inc., Liggins bought the Ring Street property two months ago. Since then, she has renovated the building and plans to open it by Tuesday, July 1.

"She's doing a great job," said Pumford, who provides Liggins with financial advice and helped her acquire the two locations. "Her business has run terrifically. I'm really proud of her and her sister."

"Every time I'm there (at the North Michigan location), the kids are happy and engaged in activity."

As a satellite location, PattyCake PlayHouse II will provide preschool and after school care to children ages 3 to 12. As with the original location, it will open at 6 a.m. and close at 8 p.m. weekdays.

Parents already are enrolling their children, Liggins said. She anticipates 32 children once the doors open.

Liggins also plans to offer parenting outreach classes. She plans to partner with the Red Cross in hopes of bringing guest speakers to the Playhouse to instruct children and enlighten parents.

Liggins already has representatives from the Saginaw Fire Department and Saginaw Police Department on deck to give lectures to the children. The speakers will discuss smoke detectors, crime and drug education. Liggins said she hopes the speakers will get the children "to understand at an early age why it's important to obey the law and be a law abider."

Both daycares accept Department of Human Services payments. Charges depend on each customer's specific needs, such as whether they need part-time or full-time care for their children, Liggins said.

Those wishing to enroll their children can reach Liggins at 792-9950.

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Saturday, June 21, 2008

## **Mount Clemens**

### **Wife killer gets life, no parole**

**Emotional statements at sentencing show split in family over 1990 case.**

**Christina Stolarz / The Detroit News**

**MOUNT CLEMENS** -- Tears of joy and sorrow filled a Macomb County courtroom Friday, when the divided family of convicted wife killer Michael George was sentenced to life in prison without parole.

The courtroom audience cried softly as two siblings of his wife, Barbara, looked directly at George and explained how much hurt he caused, while the couple's two daughters spoke of their love and support for their father.

"Our nieces haven't talked to us. You have turned this blame on us," Barbara's brother, Joe Kowynia, 45, said in Judge James Biernat's courtroom. "Now they know the truth. Look at them. They don't deserve this. You ripped their lives apart."

Michelle George acknowledged she and her sister, Tracie George, haven't spoken to their mother's family since their dad was arrested in August for the 1990 murder. While she believes her dad is innocent, she said she will always love her mother and cherishes the pictures she has of her.

"No child should ever have to choose between a mother and father," said Michelle, 20, the youngest daughter, who was 2 years old when her mother was killed. "First my mother was taken away (when I was) a child, now my father is being taken away. My dad is my life. We will never quit until my dad is free ... and they have the right person. I truly believe it will happen."

George, who maintains his innocence, cried openly through the sentencing.

"An innocent man is going to prison for the rest of his life. Please don't let it waver on your heart," George told the judge. "The more trials and tribulations the Lord puts you through, the more he loves you. He loves me a great deal."

George was convicted of first-degree murder for shooting Barbara in the head on July 13, 1990, in the back room of the Clinton Township comic book store they owned. The jury also convicted him of felony firearm, insurance fraud and obtaining money from an insurance agency under false pretenses.

Prosecutors argued George tried to make the crime look like a robbery after he shot his wife.

Defense attorneys contended he was at his mother's house in Hazel Park at the time of the shooting.

## Closing arguments heard in Dena Thompson murder trial

Posted by [pwest](#) June 23, 2008 13:27PM

ALLEGAN -- Dena "Winky" Thompson was coerced into confessing she wanted her ex-husband dead through manipulation and lies by police, her attorney said this morning in closing arguments at her murder trial.

But prosecutors say Thompson was the one doing the manipulation and lying through three days of interrogation involving four police interviews. They said she constantly changed her story, telling detectives new tidbits of information each time.

A judge was expected to send the case to the jury this afternoon. Family and friends for both Thompson and slaying victim Troy Tyo packed the courtroom today.

Dena "Winky" Thompson is accused of getting her new husband, Kristofer Thompson, to kill her ex-husband over a child custody battle. Police said she wanted to have permanent custody of her two children.

In closing arguments, Thompson's attorney, David Dodge, said she may have known her husband was going to assault, even kill, Troy Tyo.

"I submit that mere knowledge by her of Kris Thompson planning to assault Troy would not suffice" for a murder conviction, Dodge said.

"We don't have any evidence of a plan. Where is it?" he asked.

But prosecutors say her confession, given during the last 30 minutes of interrogation, is the crucial evidence.

"She admitted the plan all along was for Kris Thompson to hit him with a bat," Assistant Prosecutor Rob Kengis said, acknowledging that her husband ended up using a knife.

"It's clear the defendant is a liar, a manipulator and a killer," Kengis said.

Categories: [Breaking News](#)

## Comments

Footer

Monday, June 23, 2008

# Abraham facing jail after alleged bond violations



**Jennifer Chambers / The Detroit News**

**PONTIAC** -- Prosecutors want Nathaniel Abraham back in jail after he allegedly violated his bond by making unapproved stops at gas stations and party stores.

Abraham, who gained international attention when at age 11 he shot and killed a man in Pontiac, wears a GPS tether 24 hours a day and is confined to his mother's home in Pontiac while he awaits a court hearing Thursday related to drug possession charges.

Beth Hand, a narcotics section leader for the Oakland County Prosecutor's Office, said today she filed an emergency motion Friday to revoke Abraham's bond after learning last week that the 22-year-old, who is only allowed to leave home for appointments approved by the court or judge handling his case, is making unauthorized stops.

Hand was told of specific violations that occurred June 17 and June 18. She said Abraham made between three and five unapproved stops last week. The GPS tether tracks and records his movements.

"He is stopping at gas stations, party stores. He is not supposed to be there. We want to make sure he doesn't do anything illegal," Hand said.

Hand asked that her motion, filed with Pontiac's 50th District Judge Michael Martinez, be heard today but was told the judge would not hear the motion until Thursday, at Abraham's scheduled court hearing at which his attorney was to ask for more freedom for Abraham so he could look for a job and record rap music.

Police say Abraham had 254 Ecstasy pills in his possession when he was arrested May 30. He was charged in 50th District Court with possession with intent to deliver a controlled substance.

An Oakland County jury convicted Abraham of second-degree murder. In January 2007, Abraham was released from juvenile detention at age 21.

Abraham's attorney Richard Morgan Jr. was not available for comment this morning.

*You can reach Jennifer Chambers at (248) 647-7402 or [jchambers@detnews.com](mailto:jchambers@detnews.com)*

# Three teens will face trial in Mt. Clemens beating

BY AMBER HUNT • FREE PRESS STAFF WRITER • JUNE 23, 2008

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Three teenagers will face trial in the brutal beating of a motorist earlier this month on North River Road in Mt. Clemens, a Macomb County district judge ruled this afternoon.

One of the teens, who originally faced a felony charge of inciting a riot, had another felony added: attempted murder. That teen, Steve Lincoln, allegedly stomped and kicked the victim in the head.

That came after a 16-year-old, who initially refused to testify despite being subpoenaed, said he saw Lincoln stomp the man – 30-year-old Andy Kauffman of Plymouth – once in the head.

The teen also said he saw 16-year-old Jemall Davidson stomp Kauffman once as well.

Assistant Prosecutor Steve Kaplan maintains that both teens attacked Kauffman more viciously than the teen described. Kauffman's wife and cousin said they watched him get repeatedly kicked in the head.

A third teen, Deonte Williams, 17, faces the same charges in addition to a charge of assault with a dangerous weapon because he allegedly confessed to police that he threw a brick through the window of Kauffman's minivan. In a written statement, he said he threw the brick at random because he was upset about a girl.

That brick incited the incident, Kaplan said, though Lincoln allegedly told police that when Kauffman got out of his car to confront the group of teens – witnesses said between 20 and 30 young men were walking together – he called them the N-word, prompting the beating.

The morning was thick with emotion as the defendants' families shook their heads and mumbled as Kaplan questioned witnesses.

When the teen witness refused to testify, two deputies were told to escort him in. He still refused, prompting the judge to forbid the media from taking his picture or printing his name because he is afraid he'll be attacked for cooperating with investigators, Lucido said.

That fear seemed validated during the hearing, during which Lincoln allegedly began mouthing profanities and shaking his head as the teen testified. Lucido warned Lincoln that if he's found to be intimidating witnesses, he'll be criminally charged and barred from attending further court proceedings.

Kauffman was in a coma for several days after the attack, his wife, Angela, testified. He suffered bleeding in the brain and a fractured skull.

Through sobs, his wife testified that though her husband is now home after spending a week at Mt. Clemens General Hospital, he's "not the husband I knew."

Some of his speech is mumbled and incoherent, she said.

Charges against a fourth teen were dismissed this morning because Kaplan said the two witnesses against him are juveniles being held in a detention center. They, too, likely won't cooperate to give prosecutors enough information to bind over Johnny Allor, 17.

The three remaining teens will be arraigned July 7 in circuit court.



June 22, 2008

## B.C. tackles youth violence in new ways

**Trace Christenson**  
*The Enquirer*

Battle Creek Police Officer Joel Case sat behind the steering wheel of the black Durango talking on a cell phone as windshield wipers cleared drops of water from an afternoon shower.

"He is going to end up dead or he is going to take someone else with him," Case said into the phone. "He is probably keeping low."

Case, a member of the Battle Creek Police Department's Gang Suppression Unit, was spending an afternoon earlier this month searching for Orlando Davis, a 19-year-old Battle Creek man suspected of shooting two others early Sunday morning, June 1, outside Colors on the Corner at 84 S. Kendall St.

Case's phone call was something that, until a year ago, wouldn't have happened. On the phone was a member of a Battle Creek street gang who knew Davis; Case was urging him to provide a phone number for the wanted man.

Police believe the two victims, Kevin Kendall, 27, and Antonio Gibson, 20, were shot in the parking lot because Davis and Kendall had a long-standing dispute stemming from a fist fight on New Year's Eve.

Outside the after-hours dance club, the two men were fighting again when Davis pulled out a handgun and began firing, police said, hitting not just Kendall but also Gibson, Davis' friend.

Days later, Case, Sgt. Steve Bush and other members of the GSU team were searching for Davis. They had driven through neighborhoods looking for his car or his friends.

"I am working until 9 or 10 tonight," Case told the gang member on the phone. "And I am not running my mouth saying it was you."

"This is what is different," Sgt. Steve Bush said from the passenger seat as Case talked on the phone. "This is how we get a lot of our stuff."

Bush said members of the unit are devoted to spending their time talking to gang members, other young people and their families, building relationships where once there was only animosity with police.

Davis was arrested Friday night in Chicago after the detective bureau learned he was hiding there and the Battle Creek gang unit contacted a gang unit in Chicago who located, Detective Sgt. Todd Madsen said Saturday. Davis is being held in Chicago until he can be extradited and returned to Battle Creek.

And while Davis remained at large several weeks, just having a conversation between Case and a gang member is a step forward, Bush explained.

After he hung up, Case said gang members provide information for various reasons.

"Sometimes it's one side ratting on another, sometimes it's because there are charges hanging over their heads and sometimes they are trying to stop the violence," he said.

The shooting at Colors was one of several during a violent several days. Besides the two men outside Colors, a 13-year-old boy was shot in the toe after several shots were fired into a house on Manchester Street about 4:30 a.m. May 31 and a 53-year-old man was shot in the leg outside an East Michigan Avenue apartment house just after midnight May 27.

## GANG OVERTONES

All had gang overtones — either a dispute between gang members or at least involving suspects with gang affiliations — and, with warmer weather and the end of school approaching, the recent incidents might signal the beginning of a season of shootings.

Since then police continue looking for Davis, who is believed to have left town, but have not seen a repeat of that violence from the first weekend of the month.

"It has been quiet," Commander James Saylor said Friday. "And I don't know what to attribute that to. But that weekend was a reminder to everyone involved that this is a marathon and not a sprint and that we can't expect to sit back on our laurels and think we have it taken care of. It requires constant work by everyone and we have to reassess and analyze and adapt our responses so we will have an impact."

Battle Creek police reported 11 incidents in May involving guns, three of them tagged as gang related, and members of the gang unit said they have seen an increase in after-school fights and more activity from young people, some with gang affiliations.

After summer 2007's relative calm, police and community leaders are working to curtail gun violence and steer young people away from street conflicts.

Bush, supervisor of the gang unit, said he doesn't believe that first weekend of June was the beginning of a summer of shootings.

"There are not nearly the amount of shootings from two years ago," he said. "We have developed a lot of rapport with these kids and the feel is different."

Chief David Headings agreed with his front-line officers.

"There are going to be setbacks," he said. "If things were perfect you would not have a police department. So there will be instances where we are needed, but if we look at the entire picture and how we have more people involved than they ever have been in the lives of people in the community, I am encouraged by the passions I see."

## A YEAR AGO

Early in 2007, Battle Creek might have watched the formation of a perfect storm to attack the problem. In just the first seven months of 2005, police reported 49 gang-related shootings, including several during the day, an indication the shooters were becoming more brazen.

The police designated several officers to work full-time in a gang unit, identifying violent young people and those who might be on the fringes. But a coalition of people from business, foundations, law enforcement, and social service programs also began meeting in what became known as the Monday Morning Group. They were fed up with the violence and decided to fight it.

And about the same time, parents, some who had lost children in shootings, also organized and began helping the police, sometimes reigning in their own children.

"People were just fed up," Headings said. "There was more than one group which was fed up and the timing was almost perfect that we had community people, law enforcement, parents, the Urban League, the Advocates and business people who saw this is not the type of community that people want to do business in or live in unless we change things."

The Monday Morning Group and several other organizations raised some money to provide

programs, like a leadership academy and Peace in the Parks, to keep youngsters occupied with jobs and activities and away from the boredom which can lead to violence. Schools began finding ways to keep youngsters in class while the police and prosecutors worked to take the most violent offenders off the street.

"We have been working with Battle Creek police and the sheriff (Al Byam) to look at those active players in the gang community causing the violence and how to remove them from the street," said Prosecutor John Hallacy. "But law enforcement is not the only piece because when you remove some, there is quickly someone to take their place until you stop that flow. We need that intervention."

But this year, the Rev. Creighton Mabry, president of the United Ministerial Alliance, said the first weekend in June could have been a signal that the city is not ready for this summer, when school ends and typically shootings increase.

Some money has been raised for programs operated by the Advocates and Neighborhoods Inc., and other proposals are being considered. Mabry, who regularly works with youth and is supervising a house painting project with a heavy mentoring component, is concerned about the next few months.

"Last year, compared to this year, we are a little bit behind," he said. "We need to engage the older kids because if we don't they may wind up out in the violent window."

Some money for programs in 2007 — for mentors and a leadership academy and for some work programs — is not available in 2008 and Mabry sees that as a barrier for movement away from violence.

"Poverty produces violence," he said. "When they have no money and are bored or hustling drugs, it leads to violence. We have to get them engaged with something like employment. When they don't have anything to do they get bored and that leads to trouble."

He and others also are working with a parents group, last year called Parents Against Gang Violence, but now Families for Peace.

"They will be really important this summer," Mabry said. "They are enthused and ready to go."

He also credited the gang unit from the police department as a significant part of keeping the summer nonviolent.

Their work, Mabry said, is keeping the most violent offenders off the street.

"They are doing the prevention while we are doing the intervention," he said.

## POLICE ARE READY

Cmdr. James Saylor, supervisor of the police department's investigations division, said despite some violent acts this spring, the police department remains ready to combat the problem.

"The difference is we never understood the problem as we do now and we didn't have the same level of focus. Now we know more about the people who contribute to the overall problems."

Saylor said the gang unit, as well as the rest of the department, has worked year round to know the young offenders, their parents and other members of the community.

"We have people on the ground who are up close and personal with the people who cause the violent crime," he said. "Enforcement can affect the violent offender but we can use other ways. We can reach out to family members and others who have influence."

Outside Saylor's office at the police department, a white board is covered with two dozen names of suspected gang members and their affiliations as police officers record associations and conflicts between young people.

"I am not suggesting that we have solved the gang problem, and the names will change and the problems will continue, but we are getting a better understanding of the relationships and the history and the reasons things happen," Saylor said. "It is not always one thing that can cause a homicide but there can be a succession of events that leads up to it."

Sgt. Bush said some of the older men they meet, who once settled disputes with fists, don't understand the ease with which young gang members pull out guns and begin shooting.

## SEARCH CONTINUES

So as mentors try to change the culture of violence, the police continue to search for guns.

"A lot of kids used to carry guns in their cars or on their person," Bush said. "But we stop gang members so often that, anymore, rarely do we find them with guns."

Without easy access, he said, a dispute might not end with gunfire.

The police continue to emphasize that the gang and violence problem is not theirs alone to handle.

"Enforcement is in place but we need other things to continue," Saylor said. "The kids need to have something to look forward to and kids in general need mentoring and shaping. And for people sitting on the fence, we have to have prevention, intervention and enforcement."

Gun violence and gangs are not unique to Battle Creek, officials said, but a complete community response to combat the violence and some of the reasons for it is the only solution.

"The importance of the Monday Morning Group," Saylor said, "is they can convene and have eyes on the problem. They can pull some levers to make sure some programs exist. It shows that the community is beginning to understand the problems and the focus is on a diverse response."

"It is easier to just police the problem," Saylor said. "But I will spend all day trying to prevent it. I don't want to knock on doors to tell a mother that her kid is dead. We have done that and we will continue to do that, but certainly the less we have to do that, the better."

Headings, a member of the Monday Morning Group, said he believes the community focus he saw in 2007 remains on the problem of youth violence and that should mean the police are needed less.

"A lot of people are doing a lot of things with the youth," he said, "and there are things planned for the summer, positive things that we hope are going to come about that will mean they are doing more responsible things. The community still is interested in working on it."

Headings said the problem is community wide.

"You should care because these are the people who are going to be taking over our community at some time. You want to have a value system embedded in them so they do something that makes the community healthy."

"There are communities of similar size and socio-economic makeup and they are all suffering, too," Hallacy said, "and they are all dealing with the same types of problems. We should be proud of the steps we have taken."

"There is a lot of work that has been done to build a foundation and there are going to be ups and downs and there are going to be those no matter how much you work at them until we have a long-term systemic change."

"People want one summer to change 30 years of history," Hallacy said. "You can't do that in one summer. We have to do it in one or two generations. We are looking to change the norms of future generations."

"It takes a while but it will have a long-term impact."

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# Habitat offers affordable housing

Sunday, June 22, 2008

**By Susan Harrison Wolffis**  
[susanharrison@muskegonchronicle.com](mailto:susanharrison@muskegonchronicle.com)

In 1985, Muskegon County Habitat for Humanity offered the hope of homeownership to low-income families where little existed before.

Since the first Habitat house was built 23 years ago, the local agency has built 85 homes, putting roofs over the heads of 240 children and 90 adults now living in neighborhoods all over the county.

"Homeownership offers a stable environment for families ... and that's invaluable for everyone involved -- people and communities," says Richard Butler, who is executive director of the Muskegon County agency.

That's the good news in a bleak housing landscape made desperate by today's economy for thousands of Muskegon County residents.

At least 20 percent of the county's population qualifies as "the working poor." These are people who fall into the low-income category even though they are employed; people who struggle financially to make ends meet -- and to call a place home.

"We are finding fewer (housing) options for the working poor," says Kevin Woods of Woods Consulting in Muskegon, who works as a consultant, strategic planner and market researcher for housing developments. The problem, he says, is finding good quality housing at an affordable cost. By most calculations, people should only spend 30 percent to 35 percent of their gross income on rent or mortgage payments. That financial equation means if someone earns \$15,000 annually, only \$375 is allotted for rent or mortgage each month. If someone earns \$20,000 annually, the number rises to \$500 for rent or mortgage payments. "That won't buy you much in Muskegon," Woods says.

Sometimes that means moving in with another family. Often it means moving around a lot.

"The working poor move from place to place to place," says Maxine Lenear of Muskegon, who chairs Muskegon County Habitat for Humanity's board of directors. "They're constantly trying to find a place to live. Maybe they stay with friends for awhile, move in with family for a couple months, then move on.

"When you move all the time, you don't know what tomorrow's going to bring -- and that means they're struggling."

Greg Borgman, chairman of Muskegon's Housing Board of Appeals, said he has seen families "doubling up" in apartments only meant for one family.

"I see it all the time, especially if you have an absentee landlord, and the landlords aren't paying a lot of attention who they're renting to," Borgman says. "To make ends meet, a lot of people are doubling up -- and that creates a very unhealthy living environment.

"I just don't think we as a society have very good vision when it comes to housing and the working poor." Landlord Jill Recker, who is president of the Muskegon Area Rental Association, says there is "decent, affordable housing out there" but she sees the "ripple effect" of a bad economy hitting both tenants and landlords alike.

"Renters are having a hard time paying their rent because their hours are being cut, or whatever, and the ripple effect is that landlords are having a hard time paying their bills, too," Recker says. "We have a lot of tenants who are struggling."

For the past 20 years, Bethany Housing Ministries -- recently renamed Community enCompass -- has provided affordable rental units in the McLaughlin Neighborhood in Muskegon for those who fall into the working poor category.

Rent in the ministry's transitional housing is \$330 a month, a sum that includes utilities. Compare that to \$350-\$400 monthly rent for a one-bedroom apartment in Glen Oaks in Muskegon Township, one of the area's most affordable apartment complexes.

"I'd go so far as to say that rent in the \$500-\$600 range is out of the range of most people we'd call the working poor," says Jessie Pearson, who is a housing specialist for Community enCompass, a nonprofit agency funded by government housing grants and private donations. "And finding something for \$300?" Pearson asks. "There's no such animal."

Community enCompass has 17 apartments and five single dwellings for rent in the agency's transitional living program. Renters are able to stay in the low-rent program for two years, but have to take budgeting classes and meet with mentors to ensure they are on the path to financial stability.

The number of units in the program is a "drop in the bucket" compared to the need, says Sarah Rinsema-Sybenga, executive director of Community enCompass.

Community enCompass also is committed to rehabilitating several vacant homes to rent and eventually sell with the help of Michigan State Housing Development Authority grants. The Muskegon County Land Bank recently was established to save tax-reverted homes in the area, rehabilitate them and move them back into private ownership. And over the past two years, an innovative program by the U.S. Department of Agriculture Rural Development Initiative -- administered by a nonprofit agency, West Michigan Independent Self-Help Housing -- built 15 homes in Muskegon County for low-income families.

"Lives were changed because of it," says Ron Owens, who was director of the program. But his program is currently on hold because there is no more funding available.

The benefits of homeownership are "huge," says Timothy Burgess, executive director of the Neighborhood Investment Corp. of Muskegon, which helps low-income residents find homes and offers free foreclosure prevention services.

"If you are transient, if you move from place to place, you lose that sense of belonging," Burgess says. "That's bad enough for adults, but for children, it's irreplaceable."

There are only three Habitat for Humanity houses being built this year, only 17 Community enCompass units to rent, only two houses saved so far by the Muskegon County Land Bank -- and 12,000-plus families in Muskegon County who are considered working poor, many of them fighting to save their homes or trying to find places to live.

The increasing need has caused organizations like Mission for Area People to counsel clients to put housing costs first, says Diana Wright Stubbs, director of the faith-based ministry in Muskegon Heights that works with those in need.

"Use our food pantries so you don't have to buy groceries," she says. "Pay your rent. Pay that mortgage so you have a place to live."

Chronicle business editor Dave Alexander contributed to this story.

# Mortgage crisis squeezes families' budgets as they struggle to balance survival needs

Sunday, June 22, 2008

By Susan Harrison Wolffis

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In April, Janet Misner was five months behind on her mortgage and just days from foreclosure.

The modest three-bedroom brick home she'd bought for \$85,000 in Muskegon Township in May 2005 was scheduled to be sold in a foreclosure auction on April 25 -- leaving Misner and the niece and two nephews she's raising homeless.

"I can't tell you how awful it was," Misner says. "I've never been in this position before. I've always paid my bills, always worked -- always."

For 38 years, Misner has earned her living as a beautician, even making enough money to help support her parents before they died. Then three years ago, when her niece and nephews needed a place to live, she didn't hesitate to open her heart -- and home.

"What's mine is theirs," she says. "I've supported three generations of my family doing hair, one head at a time."

So, how did they come so perilously close to losing it all?

The answer is a crushing combination of personal, medical and financial misfortune in an unforgiving economy.

"I always thought I could go out and get another job if something happened," Misner says. "I'm not lazy. I've always worked. ... But when health and other situations, unforeseen situations, arise, sometimes that doesn't happen."

In Muskegon County, 20 percent of the residents -- people like Misner -- are working hard, but falling further behind financially.

For many of the "working poor," the financial crisis begins at home -- literally.

In 2007, 1,156 houses in Muskegon were sold in foreclosure auction, houses lost because people could no longer make their mortgage payments.

This year, between Jan. 1 and June 6, 593 houses were put on the auction block. Misner's house easily could have been number 594.

"She fought and fought and fought to save her house," says Nancy J. Latham, a program manager at Neighborhood Investment Corp., who works with scores of Muskegon County residents whose homes are in foreclosure.

Misner's tale of triumph in the face of financial insecurity starts just three years ago. She was living in a one-bedroom home that was paid for when she became legal guardian of her deceased brother's children -- Kendra Gluc, now 20; James Gluc, 16; and Bobby Gluc, 15. Obviously, she needed more room with that many people in the household. She found "a very affordable" house in the Orchard View school district where they were already attending school.

At first, she had no problem making the \$700 monthly mortgage payments, a figure that included insurance and taxes. But Misner says she was caught unaware by a "ballooning" interest rate that raised her monthly payments to \$1,000.

"I thought I had a 30-year fixed rate. I didn't know this was going to happen," she says.

Unfortunately, as her mortgage payments kept going up, her income was coming down.

As recently as a year ago, Misner was still bringing home \$1,000 every two weeks. But because of medical reasons, she was finding it more and more difficult to put in long hours at her salon, Jan's Hair Studio, and at several nursing homes where she did hair several days a week.

Then her husband, from whom she is estranged, left the family, leaving them with only one income. The only other money coming into the household is the \$163 a month -- total -- the children receive from Social Security because their father died.

About a year ago, Misner says she started the robbing Peter to pay Paul financial plan. One month, she'd pay utilities. The next, the mortgage. Her original mortgage company was sold twice. She didn't know where to turn for help, or who to call, and she kept falling further and further behind.

"Last year, I was working and just that quick, things went bad," she says. "You just don't know when you're going to get into a predicament."

She sold her salon and her car. She and the kids had yard sales to bring in a little money. The boys shoveled sidewalks and driveways. The children also did odd jobs for the neighbors and people in their church and turned the money over to Misner to buy groceries.

"I knew I needed to save this house for them," Misner says. "I knew wherever we went, we'd be together, but they needed stability."

Before Christmas, Misner started calling around to see if there was anyone who could help. She ended up calling Neighborhood Investment Corp., who works with scores of Muskegon County residents whose homes are in foreclosure.

"When I called, the person on the telephone said: Let's not give up yet. This isn't a lost cause," Misner remembers. "She gave us hope."

It took months of meetings and reams of paper work, but Latham helped Misner negotiate a mortgage remodification with Citi Residential Lending, a division of Citi Corp. They got the monthly payment down to \$888, which includes house insurance and taxes.

But in January, during the course of the negotiations, she underwent surgery to repair varicose veins in her legs. Because she is self-employed, she brought in no income while she was off work -- which vaulted her into full financial crisis.

The only way Misner could qualify for the reduced mortgage payment she had been striving for was to increase her salary -- and she couldn't work.

"You know, one thing I've learned is that people shouldn't throw stones when they hear stories like this," Misner says. "You never know what's going to happen."

Around Easter, Misner was still recuperating from surgery, sitting in bed and reading when "the kids called to me someone was at the door." The man didn't knock. Instead, he tacked a foreclosure notice to the house.

Alone in her room, Misner was in tears.

"They say God never lets you down," she says, "but he's scared me to death a few times."

She was afraid to show the kids just how frightened she was, she says. As the April 25 auction date loomed ever closer, she started looking for places to rent.

"I felt like I was letting us all down," she says.

But in a turn of events worthy of a movie, two days before the sale, Misner's life was turned "rightside up" when she was notified that she was eligible for medical disability. She had enough money coming in to qualify for the new mortgage payment.

Misner, who still works a few hours a week at Brookhaven Medical Care Facility's beauty salon, brings in \$1,600 a month -- "enough to pay for everything."

"Two days. I was two days away from losing my home," Misner says, tears streaming down her face. "Talk about a miracle."

A few days after learning the good news, Bobby and James were sitting on the front porch, laughing and joking when a neighbor asked them why they were so happy.

"Because we're staying," James told him. "Because this is our home. This is where we belong."

# Flint pours federal money into rehabbing Carriage Town homes for sale while many residents struggle to own their own place

Posted by Joe Lawlor | The Flint Journal June 21, 2008 17:00PM

**FLINT, Michigan** -- The city is spending a whopping \$450,000 in federal money to renovate just five houses near downtown at a time when many Flint residents need help buying homes or making their house payments.

Two century-old, vacant houses in or near the Carriage Town neighborhood will get \$125,000 each poured into them and be sold for about \$100,000 apiece in what is already a glutted housing market.

The owners of three or four not-yet-chosen homes will split the remaining \$200,000 for renovations.

Both city administrators and the City Council OK'd the spending -- which is part of an effort to improve the Third Avenue corridor between Kettering University and downtown -- although houses in the Carriage Town area typically sell for \$50,000 or less.

The federal funding is designed to boost the city's affordable housing and can be used to build, buy or rehabilitate homes or provide direct rental assistance to low-income people.

The money could have helped turn about 180 renters into homeowners through the city's downpayment assistance program.

That sounds good to Flint resident T'nishia Jones, who believes the five houses are a waste of taxpayer money.

"This is not fair to the rest of the city," Jones said. "It should be used on something that benefits the whole general Flint area."

The rehab work is being coordinated by Flint Neighborhood Improvement Preservation Project, a local housing agency that receives government money. The neighborhood is near Hurley Medical Center and has a very active historic association that has spent years fighting blight, drug dealing and prostitution.

"They need to do a cost-benefit analysis," said Flint resident Tony Stevens, who hopes to receive downpayment assistance for a home he's buying in the city's college and cultural area. "It's not really where the money should be going."

Mayor Don Williamson said the funding and renovations will spur the start of a renaissance in Carriage Town.

"We're rebuilding the city," said Williamson, pointing out that it's part of the city's efforts to revamp the Third Avenue corridor connecting Kettering University with downtown. "If you look at just one thing, it might not be the best thing for Flint. But if you look at the whole picture, we're on the right track."

But real estate agent Ann Fotenakes said spending the money on high price-tag renovation projects is a bad investment.

"I think it's a misuse of government money, totally," said Fotenakes, who does real estate work in Flint and also is a Flushing Township trustee. "They (Flint officials) need to have their heads examined."

Carriage Town resident Peggy Brisbane-Noblit said she has applied to have her two-story 1896 Queen Anne-style home rehabilitated, including her front doors and other renovations, with the \$200,000 set aside to help owners with repairs.

"I think it's a wonderful program, and if I'm chosen, that would be fabulous," Brisbane-Noblit said.

The city is using part of its \$6 million in federal block grants and U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development HOME dollars to renovate the homes.

Councilman Scott Kincaid, who voted against the funding, said nearly 40 percent of the city's housing stock are rental properties and they city should have been used to help more people buy homes.

"That would do a lot more for the city than spending it on a few houses," said Kincaid, who also suggested using some of the money for foreclosure prevention.

The city currently spends about \$200,000 to \$300,000 per year on down payment assistance, with grants of as much as \$7,500 per family.

Nancy Jurkiewicz Rich, the director of the city's Department of Community and Economic Development, the agency that helps decide how the money is spent, said the downpayment assistance program is "very effective."

The housing project mirrors one done last year: The city spent \$400,000 in federal money to renovate four houses along Stone Street and West Second Avenue.

Those houses haven't been completed and are not yet for sale, but officials hope to sell them for about \$100,000 also.

Judy Christenson, director of Flint NIPP, which is renovating the homes, called the projects worthwhile. She argues that public entities should invest in areas where the private market won't.

"Yes, it's costly, but what are we going to do if we want to revitalize a neighborhood?" said Christenson. "Is everyone just going to pack up their bags and leave?"

Rich said the city and other groups, such as Kettering University, University of Michigan-Flint and Hurley Medical Center, are all looking to help rehabilitate the Third Avenue corridor.

"We're calling it a targeted investment," Rich said. "We're trying to reach a critical mass and turn around the market to the point where there's private investment."

Kate Fields, of the Greater Eastside Community Association and a frequent critic of Williamson's administration, said now is not the time to be adding housing stock to a housing market without enough buyers.

She said her agency has three completely-renovated homes on Flint's east side that are on the market for \$53,000.

"We haven't had anybody look at them in eight months," Fields said.

Carriage Town resident Phillip Barnhart said neighbors expect the houses will sell for far less than \$100,000, but he said it's worth it because the neighborhood needs a boost.

"If the city really focuses on it, it could be beneficial to the whole city," Barnhart said.

The investment details surprised some members of City Council, which approved the federal funding.

"Five houses? That's it?" said Councilman Delrico Loyd. "We need to do better than that."

Loyd said he voted for the measure, but only because he was 's worried that the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development would take the money away if it wasn't spent quickly.

Louis Berra, acting HUD field officer for Flint, said the agency would be concerned about the city making bad real estate investments, even if the investments technically followed all the rules and regulations.

"We're always concerned about whether the money is being spent effectively and efficiently," said Berra, pointing out that HUD periodically reviews city programs.

Christenson said the renovations are expensive because the homes are nearly a century old, and federal rules requires that the homes be brought up to local and federal building codes as part of the renovations.

"If you're in for a penny, you're in for a pound," Christenson said.

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**Working poor vignette: Wondresha Bass**

Posted by [llupo](#) June 21, 2008 22:05PM



Wondresha Bass

**Family:** Daughters Mi'Desha Briggs, 11; and 7-year-old twins Wal-Tanajia and Wal-Tanicquia Trotter.



**Home:** Rents a house in Muskegon for \$495 a month but the house, which went into foreclosure when the landlord could no longer pay the bills, is now for sale by the bank. "It's a mess," Bass said. "I don't know what's going to happen. You don't know who's going to buy it. It's scary."

**Most recent job:** Bass has worked at Brookhaven Medical Care Facility full time as a certified nurse's aide for five years.

**Last week's take-home pay:** \$668 for two weeks. Bass also receives \$170 Social Security disability per month for Wal-Tanajia, who was born with several birth defects. She rarely receives child support.

**How they got there:** Bass has spent most of the past year paying off debts and clearing up her credit report so one day she can qualify to buy a house. She owed "thousands of dollars" in hospital and utilities bills which she paid off with her income money she could earn working overtime and on the holidays.

She took a budgeting class through Neighborhood Investment Corp. in Muskegon to prepare for homeownership. "I want to buy a house, but my credit was a mess. I'm working on getting it as good as I can." Since she started working full time, she no longer receives child care assistance or food stamps from the Department of Human Services, which puts further strain on her paycheck. "Just when you think you're getting ahead," she says. "It's always something."

**Toughest time:** When asked what's been her toughest time, Bass said: "All the time." But the hardest stretch was seven years ago. Bass did not know she was pregnant with twins until the girls were born. Wal-Tanajia was born without a left ear and jawbone and a cleft palate. She needed around-the-clock care and still requires nursing care. She relied on a

feeding tube for several years.

To care for her, Bass reduced her hours to part time for the first year. Wal-Tanajia is scheduled for surgn July at the University of Michigan Medical Center to reconstruct her jaw. "It's just very stressful," Bass said. "I worry about my baby. She doesn't do well in the hospital. She's done had it hard, but she's a real trooper. She doesn't let anything hold her back."

Last year, what was supposed to be an overnight stay turned into a two-week hospitalization. Although much of Wal-Tanajia's medical care is covered financially, Bass has to take time off work for the surgery. Wal-Tanajia will need to go to Ann Arbor once a week for nine weeks of after-care.

**Speaking:** "I'm looking for a house. I'm so tired of moving. I want to own my own place for me and my girls -- someplace to call my

Categories:

## Comments

Footer

## First Gentleman Joins Hundreds at Russ Mawby's Signature Harbor Habitat Project at New Crystal Springs

Ralph Heibutzki

The physical reality of home ownership at Harbor Habitat for Humanity's Crystal Estates project took a major leap forward recently, with help from a group of AmeriCorps volunteers.

About 250 AmeriCorps volunteers from all over the state converged on Crystal Estates last Wednesday and Thursday for two days of landscaping, and the building of sheds, subfloors, and framing. Harbor Habitat is overseeing the construction of Crystal Estates, which was chosen as this year's Russ Mawby Signature Service Project – a program that's designed to serve a different community every year.

Volunteers briefly spent an hour last Wednesday, June 11, to celebrate the work they were preparing to do on the eight-acre site, which off is Empire and Crystal Avenue, in Benton Charter Township. Twelve new homeowners are expected to occupy 21 houses there by the end of the year.

Benton Harbor resident Jonel Archibald was among those ready to do their part. Archibald started in November 2006 with AmeriCorps, and worked on a similar project in Detroit, "doing basically the same thing (as on Crystal Estates) – I'm kind of like a veteran, if you will," she said.

Asked what brought her out, Archibald cited the example of Cassandra Rimpson, who will occupy the first home at 1709 Hope Way. Archibald said that, as a tenant and mother of two children, aged 3 and 5, she relates to Rimpson's story. "I feel good being able to make a part of making her (Rimpson's) dreams come true, and hopefully, one day, hoping that mine will (come true), as well," Archibald said.

Michigan's First Gentleman, Daniel Mulhern, showed up to work with the volunteers, and encourage them, too. Mulhern – who also serves as chairman of the state's Community Services Commission – kept his remarks brief and upbeat. "What a great day, huh?" Mulhern said. "I'm not here to lead today, I'm here to follow – and I'm not here to speak, I'm here to work."

Mulhern also saluted the efforts of Mawby, the former longtime CEO of the Kellogg Foundation – which shows up among the world's largest, particularly for agriculture, Mulhern said. "Russ has quite literally created programs to change lives," Mulhern said. "He was my predecessor when he talked me into this crazy job, as head of the (Community Services) commission – and he's been there every day, to guide us, and lead us, any time we have a question."

Mawby voiced pleasure at the scope of the project. "In the final analysis, only people are important," Mawby said. "People make a difference. This will be a new neighborhood, this'll be a new community, and all of us will have been a part of that building this future for the families."

Nobody seemed more excited than Rimpson, known as "Pinky," Habitat's office manager -- a job that she's held since February 2007. Rimpson qualified for her new home based on need, because she has three boys, aged 2, 3 and 4.

Thanks to the investment of so much volunteer energy, people like herself will gain a stability that they never knew as tenants, Rimpson said. "We don't have to worry about when the lease is going to be up, or if we're going to get a slum landlord," Rimpson said. "We're going to be living in an efficient home, from the ground up, with people like you that have answered the call to service – it means a great to me and my family."

Harbor Habitat Executive Director Mike Green expected to see significant progress on the sheds and subflooring by the end of the two-day stint. "Everybody's got a job to do, and we'll get it all done," Green said. "Two days is good. This will put us in a good position for the middle of June."

Green also looked forward to seeing what the AmeriCorps volunteers bring home from their Benton Harbor experiences. "Many of them would probably never come to Benton Harbor, since they're doing things in their own communities," Green said. "When they leave here, they're going to say, 'Hey, I don't know what everybody is saying about Benton Harbor, but where I was at, we had a good time.'"

Habitat itself has been using AmeriCorps volunteers for about eight years now, so those ties go back a long way, Green said. Five AmeriCorps members are working with Habitat right now, he added. "It gives people an opportunity to do something to improve their community," Green said. "It's really nice to see the Boys and Girls

Club people who are here with AmeriCorps."

Green was referring to volunteers like Tanisha Brooks, of Benton Harbor -- who briefly shared the stage with her Detroit counterpart, Paul Jedek. Brooks also volunteers with SMART Choice, a program for girls 11-14 that teaches them to deal with bullying, drug abuse and other issues, she said. The program is offered through the Boys and Girls Club.

Brooks has been an AmeriCorps volunteer since December 2007, she said. Asked what brought her to Crystal Estates, Brooks responded: "Benton Harbor has always been thought of as a bad community, so I figured by being here, and helping out, we're making it a better place. It's something I wanted to do, since I am from here."

Community Service Commission Executive Director Musette A. Michael thought that this year's Signature Service Project benefited from a more focused volunteer energy. "You can see all the members serving in one place," Michael said. "Last year, we were in Detroit, in two different neighborhoods. We were scattered, so you didn't get the great camaraderie in seeing everybody together."

Stevensville resident Steve Matheny and his wife, Carol, seconded those feelings. For three summers, the Mathenys have volunteered for Habitat through Thrivent, a Lutheran financial services organization that sponsored the second and fourth homes at Crystal Estates.

Asked what brought her to Crystal Estates, Carol Matheny responded, "Something more physical, not paperwork-oriented," while Steve Matheny appreciated the chance to work together with so many different people. "That's so awesome to see everybody out -- not just from Benton Harbor, but from Berrien Springs, and everywhere," he said.



Saturday, June 21, 2008

# Volunteer program lets students give back to Detroit

## Summer in the City makes it easy for teens to help

Jessica Nunez / The Detroit News

**DETROIT --** Wendy Lewis of Plymouth had high hopes for her 15-year-old son Kyle when she dropped him off at Groves High School in Beverly Hills on Tuesday morning for the first day of Summer in the City.

It's a program that connects Metro Detroit high school students to volunteer opportunities in Detroit, organizing projects such as painting murals, sprucing up parks and working with schoolchildren.

"Doing this will teach him work ethic, about helping other people and maybe he'll gain some skills that he wouldn't otherwise learn," Lewis said, watching her son gravitate toward a group of teenagers waiting to carpool to Detroit.

"Hopefully he'll learn some interpersonal skills, too. He's pretty shy."

The same morning, at Glazer Elementary School in Detroit near the Lodge and Davison freeways, another mother had equally high hopes for her children. Sherrie Crook fed her son, Christian, 5, and her grandson, Cameron Walker, 6, French toast sticks while they waited for Summer in the City volunteers to arrive.

This is the third year Summer in the City has run a program at Glazer called Arts and Smarts. The program works something like a day camp, with play and enrichment activities planned during the day and field trips every Friday to museums and parks throughout the city.

"We rushed to get the boys in," Crook said.

The free program is limited to just 60 Glazer children, whose parents can sign them up when a flyer is passed around near the end of the school year.

"It keeps them busy doing something other than playing video games, and it helps them retain what they learn during the school year." Crook said.

Making the program as fulfilling for volunteers as it is for the community was Ben Falik's goal when he co-founded Summer in the City in 2002.

"Community service is a cultural norm," Falik said. "But there wasn't really a good vehicle or market for volunteers. You either have the option of participating in a one-day event or you have to make a huge time commitment to an organization. We wanted to lower the barriers to entry."

Summer in the City volunteers do not need sign up in advance or follow a pre-planned schedule. The program runs Tuesday to Friday from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. This year, it started June 17 and will end Aug. 15. Volunteers can show up every day, one day a week or just one day all summer. On Tuesday, the first day of the 2008 program, 113 volunteers showed up at the seven carpool sites in Metro Detroit. Attendance ranged between 100 and 130 volunteers during the first week, with the highest number showing up on Friday for the first weekly barbecue.

"A really big goal of ours is to try to get people involved with and feel connected to Detroit when they're 14, rather than try to lure them back from Chicago when they're adults, which is futile in my opinion," Falik said.

Falik, who grew up in Bloomfield Township, came up with the idea one day with friends Michael Goldberg and Neil Greenburg while they were sophomores in college. Falik attended Columbia University in New York City, where he says he "got really into cities." He and friends volunteered and they realized they weren't alone. If they set up projects, people would likely help.

During the first year of Summer in the City, attendance averaged 12 volunteers per day. "It started as a small thing, driven by volunteers," Falik said. "Since then, there's been a tenfold increase."

Friends and acquaintances usually call their attention to a community group or project that could use some help over the summer. Goldberg said.

In 2006, Temple Beth El in Bloomfield Hills was notified that Glazer, a school named after a former rabbi from the temple, would have to discontinue its summer program due to a lack of funding. Congregation members notified Summer in the City, and the group took on the task.

Rachel Pultusker, a student at the University of Michigan, took charge of the program, which had 20 children in its first year. This year, 56 kids are enrolled.

"It's a fun, safe and exciting place for kids to be in the summer," Pultusker said as children threw Frisbees and climbed a playscape with Summer in the City volunteers on the playground. "It doesn't take much to entertain them."

Students must finish the school year with passing grades to attend Arts and Smarts, and Pultusker said it really motivates them.

"There were some kids who attended in 2006 and then couldn't come back last year," she said. "Those kids would see me during this school year and say, 'Hey, I'm going to pass, I'm going to be able to come this year.' And they're here now." Pultusker works at the Glazer library a few days a week and sees the children on a regular basis.

This year, Pultusker handed the reigns over to a Summer in the City intern, Michelle Heller, who recently graduated from North Farmington High School. Heller volunteered during high school and wanted to stay active in the program.

"I was Rachel's shadow last summer," Heller said. "So I was kind of planning to be able to fill this role this year." Heller will attend the University of Maryland in the fall, but plans to volunteer with Summer in the City during her summers at home.

There are 30 people who volunteer or are paid a stipend to help run Summer in the City, and they visit high schools in the spring to recruit summer volunteers. Most of the volunteers come from suburban high schools, but there has been an effort to do more recruiting in Detroit. This year, staff members talked to students and passed out flyers at University Preparatory Academy High School, Cass Technical High School and Western High School, as well as several charter schools.

Lavashia Mundy, a sophomore at Cass Tech, said she plans to volunteer most days this summer. Tuesday, she was at Glazer, playing on the playground with young children.

"It means a lot to me to give back to my community," she said. "Plus, if I wasn't here, I'd probably be sitting at home watching TV."

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